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Date: March 1979

Amnesty International
International Secretariat
10 Southampton Street
London WC2E 7HP

THE MISSING CHILDREN OF ARGENTINA

"A single death by firing squad can provoke a world-wide scandal: with the thousands of disappeared people there is always the convenience of uncertainty there are no crimes to report or explanations to be given."

Eduardo Galeano, Index, March/April 1978

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/TPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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THE MISSING CHILDREN OF ARGENTINA

The methods used against "subversion" by the Argentinian Armed Forces since they seized control of the country in a coup d'etat on 24 March 1976, have left many homes broken and thousands of people racked with uncertainty about the fate of their relatives. On 27 November 1978 a petition denouncing the disappearance of 1,542 people, and signed by 1,221 relatives of the missing people, was presented to the Supreme Court of Justice. Those signing stated that they were appealing to the Supreme Court because all other means of establishing the whereabouts of the disappeared had failed. The petition emphasised that in all cases, the arrest of the people concerned took place with a great show of uniformed men, firearms and vehicles and had all the appearances of a legal operation carried out by the competent authorities. This petition, like all previous requests and complaints, has elicited no information from the government. Even the Supreme Court recently complained that in its attempts to trace missing persons, it had received almost no cooperation from the authorities. On March 3 1979 the Supreme Court accepted, for the first time, an appeal by the father of Alfredo Antonio Giorgi, a 33 year-old scientist who was snatched from the State National Institute of Industrial Technology (INTI) on November 27. The Court said it had no jurisdiction over the case, but ordered an Appeals Court to start an investigation on two writs of habeas corpus filed on Dr. Giorgi's behalf.

The mothers of the Plaza de Mayo who gather in silent protest every Thursday in the square outside government house have themselves risked arrest and disappearance trying to obtain some news about their beloved ones. On 10 December 1978 a mass was celebrated in Buenos Aires to commemorate the first anniversary of the kidnapping of 2 French nuns and eleven others connected to the mothers' movement. Sister Alice Domon, together with 6 women and 1 man, were abducted outside the Church of the Holy Cross on 8 December 1977 in Buenos Aires. Two days later Sister Leonie Duquet, three women and one man suffered the same fate. On 18 January 43 women were detained for several hours after they had tried to hold their usual Thursday vigil in the Plaza de Mayo. On several subsequent occasions the women have been prevented by police from entering the square.

Many children who have witnessed the abduction of their father or mother or both are psychologically scarred and puzzled by the manner in which their parents have disappeared without trace. A letter written by a 13 year-old child to President Videla gives some insight into the effect of a parent's abduction on family life:-

I began a court case (No. 36.792) before Dr. Sambucetti, Juzgado No. 2 in La Plata. During it, reports were requested from the Children's Hospital, the Fire Brigade, the Regional military unit and the Police. These replies were also negative.

I presented a writ of habeas corpus (No. 11.290) in the Federal Capital on 27 February 1978, Juzgado Q - Secretaria 18, Judge Larrea. The response was negative. The case was rejected and sent to the Exma. Camara for possible criminal action. I never received any further response.

Along with other grandmothers in the same predicament, I presented myself to the President of the Supreme Court of Justice to seek protection for my granddaughter in a written note dated 28 April 1978. In July I received a written reply from the Supreme Court declaring itself powerless in the case.

In spite of one year ten months of ceaseless and desperate searching, my granddaughter has still not been found. I have been to Police Stations, magistrates courts, Casa-cuna, Orphanages and Military Regiments. I have talked to members of the Church, civilian personalities in various neighbourhoods. All without result. Clara Anahi, who is now over two years old, has not appeared; no-one has explained the cause of her disappearance.

12 September 1977.

Simon Antonio RIQUELO (Uruguayan)

Simon Antonio Riquelo was 20 days old at the time of his abduction. He is the son of Sara Rita Mendez Lampodio, a Uruguayan refugee who was living in Buenos Aires until her abduction on 13 July 1976, along with Simon. In October 1976 she reappeared in official detention in Montevideo, Uruguay. According to the Uruguayan Armed Forces, Sara Mendez Lampodio was arrested in Uruguay on 23 October 1976. There has been no news of Simon Riquelo since his abduction.

Amaral GARCIA (Uruguayan)

Abducted on 8 November 1974 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with his father, Floreal Garcia, and his grandfather. The dead bodies of the two adults were subsequently found in Uruguay. There has been no further news of Amaral Garcia, who was only three-years old at the time of abduction.

Daughter of Beatriz Recchia de Garcia

Beatriz Recchia, a 28 year old teacher, was abducted from her home on 12 January 1977. A few days later her daughter, aged 3 years, was taken from her grandparents' house. Child returned to grandparents house.

Anatole Julien GRISONAS and Victoria Julien GRISONAS (Uruguayans)

Aged 4 years and 1 year respectively. They were abducted in Buenos Aires with their parents, Roger Julien Caceres and Virginia Grisonas. There has been no further news either of the children or their parents.

There are unconfirmed reports that abducted infants have been given new identities and sent for adoption. Another group of women, who have come to be known as the grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, are searching for grandchildren they have never seen. The grandmothers only know that their daughters or daughters-in-law were pregnant when they disappeared. On August 5 1978 the grandmothers placed a paid advertisement in La Prensa pleading with the authorities and to persons unknown who might have adopted their grandchildren. In a few cases children born in captivity have been handed over to their grandparents.

Silvia Angelica CORAZZA de SANCHEZ

Silvia Angelica Corazza de Sanchez was abducted on 13 May 1977 in a bar called El Nuevo Clave in the town of Lanus, Buenos Aires province., by persons dressed in civilian clothing. At the time of her abduction she was two months' pregnant.

In December 1977 Silvia's parents received a letter in her handwriting announcing that she was expecting to give birth to her baby around Christmas. On 3 January 1978 three men in plain cloths arrived at her parents' house bringing with them Silvia herself and her baby daughter, who had been born on 29 December 1977. The men forced Silvia's mother to sign a document which, among other points, stated that she would not hand over the baby to anyone else. The men then left the baby, called Maria de las Mercedes, with her grandparents. They took Silvia away again and nothing has been heard of her since.

Since receiving the baby, Silvia's parents have attempted to obtain a birth certificate and identity document for her from the authorities. The Minister of the Interior promised Silvia's father that the baby would be given a birth certificate.

Silvia's husband, Alberto Sanchez, a 37-year old surgeon, now lives in Europe. He believes that the Argentine Ministry of the Interior's promise to give his daughter a birth certificate indicates that the government is also in a position to locate his wife.

In June 1978 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Buenos Aires was informed by the Argentine authorities that Silvia Corazza de Sanchez was in detention at the disposal of the Executive Power (ie in preventive detention without charge or trial under the State of Siege imposed on 6 November 1974).

Her place of detention was not made known. By this time she had a visa for Norway and it was expected that she would shortly be able to join her husband in that country. However, in mid-November 1978 the Argentine authorities stated that Silvia Corazza de Sanchez was not in detention and that the previous statement was an error, due to a misunderstanding.

Carla Rutilo ARTES

Official connivance between the Argentine and Uruguayan Security Forces is well known. However, according to the French publication Cimade (February 1978) the Argentine Ambassador to Paris admitted on 6 February 1978 that the same (un)official agreement exists between the Argentine authorities and the Bolivian government. According to the Cimade source, four Argentinians have been arrested in Bolivia by the Bolivian security forces. All four were handed over to the Argentine authorities and all four have disappeared without trace.

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(h) First writ of habeas corpus presented at the Juzgado Federal No.2 in San Martin (Federal Court) before Juez Luis M. Perez Habbellini on 30 August 1976. It was rejected with costs - because the two persons were not in any detention center.

(i) Second writ of habeas corpus presented in Juzgado Federal No.1 in San Martin before Dr. Virasoro in April 1977. No result as yet.

Ana Maria BARAVALLE and Julio Cesar GALIZZI

Disappeared 7 August 1976. Ana Maria was pregnant and the baby was due in mid-January 1977.

Liliana Beatriz CAIMI de MARIZCURRENA and Andres MARIZCURRENA

Disappeared with her husband Andres on 13 October 1976 in the locality of Martinez. Liliana was pregnant and baby was due in January or February 1977.

Gabriela CARRIQUIRIBORDE de REPPETUR and her husband Jorge REPPETUR (photograph available).

Disappeared with her husband on 30 September 1976 in La Plata, Buenos Aires Province. Baby was due in the last two weeks of January 1977.

Liliana Graciela CASTILLO BARRIOS de OVEJERO (photograph available)

Disappeared with her husband Hector Ovejero on 5 May 1977 in the locality of San Justo. Baby was due in first two weeks of September 1977.

Maria Cristina COURNOU de GRANDI and Claudio Nicolas GRANDI (photograph available)

Disappeared from their home in Perdido de Moreno, Buenos Aires Province on 22 June 1976. Baby was due sometime between November 1976 and January 1977.

Elena de la CUADRA (photograph available)

Disappeared 23 February 1977. Baby due in June 1977.

Maria Claudia GARCIA IRURETA GOYENA de GELMAN and Marcelo Ariel GELMAN

Disappeared 24 August 1976 in Buenos Aires. Baby due at beginning of November 1976.

Ana Maria LANCILLOTTO de MENNA and Domingo MENNA

Disappeared 19 August 1976 in Buenos Aires. Baby due at end of August 1976.

Monica Maria LEMOS de LAVALLE and Gustavo Antonio LAVALLE

Disappeared 20 July 1977 in San Fernando de Jose C. Paz, Buenos Aires. Baby due in mid-September 1977.

Alicia Estela SEGARRA

According to reports made by neighbours, the Army surrounded the house belonging to Alicia Estela Segarra and her husband, Carlos Alberto Mendoza on 23 June 1978. Alicia was eight months pregnant at the time. There has been no further news of the adults or the baby.

Beatriz RECCHIA de GARCIA

Abducted in Villa Adelina on 12 January 1977. She was six months pregnant at the time.

Silvia PARODI de OROZCO

Abducted on 26 March 1976, Pregnant.

Graciela Gladis PUJOL BRUNA de OLMEDO (L.C. 10.633.613)

Abducted when she was seven months pregnant in October 1976.

Gloria DELARD de MELERO

Abducted with her husband Roberto Cristi Melero on 16 March 1976 in Ramos Mejia. She was two months pregnant.

Beatriz Haydee NEUHAS de MARTINIS

Abducted on 16 March 1976 when she was eight months pregnant, with her husband Juan Francisco Martinis.

Liliana Celia FONTANA

Aged 20. Abducted on 1 July 1977 when she was five months pregnant.

Sra. de DIAZ

Wife of Mario Diaz. She was abducted a few days after her husband on 14 September 1976.

Marcela Cristina COEYTES de CARRANZA

Teacher. Abducted with her husband on 19 August 1976. She was four months pregnant. Wife of Carlos Alberto CARRANZ.

Raquel NEGRO

Abducted with her son Sebastian aged 18 months at Mar del Plata on 2 January 1978. She was six months pregnant.

Mirta Monica ALONSO de HUERAVILO

Disappeared on 19 May 1977 when she was five months pregnant. Wife of Oscar Lautaro Hueravilo.

Bettina TARNOPOLSKY

Aged 15. Abducted from the house of her grandmother in July 1976. Four other members of her family are also missing.

Further information on the case provided by Bettina's grandmother, Rosa Daneman de Edelberg:

.....because of my advanced age, 72 years, I usually have with me my grandchildren, who each take it in turns to sleep with me for a week or two. At 1.00 o'clock in the morning of 15 July (1976), plainclothed persons come to the house, bringing my son-in-law, Hugo Tarnopolsky, who knocked on the door and asked us to open it saying, 'Open up, Nona, it's Hugo. When I opened it, I met my son-in-law and the plainclothes men who said they were the police and, with threats and blows, they asked for my granddaughter, Bettina Tarnopolsky, who, for the reasons given before, had been sharing my house for a few days. After they had violently locked me out on the patio, I heard them taking away my granddaughter, half-dressed, since most of her clothes were in her room. I also found, when I tried to contact my daughter Blanca Edelberg de Tarnopolsky that these people who claimed to be policemen had ripped out the telephone, leaving me incomunicado. It took me some hours to recover from the physical and psychological violence of my unexpected visitors; then I went down to the street and rang my relatives from a public telephone, as it was impossible to contact my daughter. Together with one of my sons, I went to the home of my granddaughter Bettina's parents, at Pena 2600, Dept. A, Capital Federal, and found the front door completely destroyed and the place empty.

We asked the neighbours and the caretaker for information and found out that, some hours before the events at my house recounted above, plainclothes men, claiming to be police, asked the caretaker for the Tarnopolsky family and he showed them the apartment they lived in. When these policemen received no immediate response to their shouts from my granddaughter's parents, the apartment door was blown open, so that they could enter straight away, to detain and take away my daughter and son-in-law. It was to be remembered that this took place before the events at my home.

Maria Claudia FALCONE

Aged 15. Abducted from the house of a relative on 16 August/September 1976. Student at the Colegio de Bellas Artes.

"The attitude of the dictatorship at the end of that same year (1976) was that the ferment of the so-called "university subversion" was also to be found in secondary schools and therefore they concentrated on the Liceo Victor Mercante, the Colegio Nacional and the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes. According to 'denuncias' made by the Rector (Sta. Macaruk) and by fellow-pupils, Claudia disappeared, according to eye-witness accounts, at the hands of military personnel, wearing civilian clothes on the morning of 16 September 1978 from the home of an aunt, along with a friend. From that time onwards, in spite of actions undertaken at police stations and military barracks in the area, as well as at the Ministry of the Interior, there has been total silence.